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## **Introduction**

The Broadway corridor between US 19/23 and Downtown Asheville presents a unique opportunity for the City of Asheville to achieve several goals designed to enhance the livability of the community. Many of these goals can be listed under the general category of Smart Growth. This development pattern would make efficient use of our limited land and resources, promote a wide variety of transportation and housing options, absorb and effectively serve a growing population, and protect the architectural and environmental character of the City through compatible, high quality, and environmentally sensitive development. The Broadway Corridor has the potential to serve as a model for this type of development pattern in Asheville, demonstrating how new development can be successfully integrated with existing development.

Broadway historically served as a major entrance to downtown Asheville. Although some of this function was lost as a result of the prominence of Merrimon Avenue, this role is being revived with the scale of the recent reconstruction of Broadway. The street links the campus of the University of North Carolina at Asheville with Downtown, providing an opportunity for development that serves the university and its students and faculty. Broadway has also traditionally linked the adjacent neighborhoods to each other and to Downtown. The scale of the recent improvements to the section of Broadway between Chestnut Street and US 19/23 destroyed some of the linkages between the neighborhoods, creating the need to reestablish these links.

Past and recent development along Broadway has not always been compatible with the role of the street as a major entry into Downtown, as a link between UNCA and downtown, or as a link between the adjacent neighborhoods. Some of the newer land uses cater only to motorists, paying little attention to residents of adjacent neighborhoods who could walk to businesses along Broadway. In spite of these examples of incompatible development, there are examples of development that are consistent with the street's role as major link in the community. In addition, there are also many opportunities for development and redevelopment along the corridor that would strengthen this role while achieving other goals identified by the community.

The purpose of the Broadway Corridor Action Plan is to provide a detailed guide for the future development and redevelopment of the corridor study area. Upon adoption by the City Council, the plan will become part of the comprehensive plan for the City of Asheville. It will be used by elected officials, City staff, and the community in making decisions relating to the future of the Broadway corridor. As opportunities for development and redevelopment along the corridor are identified, the plan will provide a template to assure that future development benefits property owners, developers, neighbors, and the community as a whole.

The development template and guidelines identified in this plan were developed with the input of Broadway corridor business owners, property owners, residents, and neighbors working with City staff. The involvement of the community will be important not only in

the development of the corridor plan but also in its implementation. The ongoing commitment and support of the community will be necessary to achieve the goals identified in the plan. A broad cross-section of the community, including business owners, property owners, residents, and city staff, among others, must work cooperatively to enable the Broadway corridor to realize the goals set forth in this plan.

### **Planning Process**

At their annual planning retreat in January 1999, the Asheville Planning and Zoning Commission identified a number of areas for which small area or corridor plans should be prepared. The areas and corridors were identified based on the development pressures facing them or their potential for development. The Broadway corridor was identified and assigned a high priority based upon its potential for development and the desire of the Planning and Zoning Commission to direct appropriate growth to the corridor. Adding to the need for Broadway's corridor plan was the protective residential zoning applied to the northern end of the corridor in 1997 by City Council. In assigning this protective zoning, Council stated that it was temporary measure to protect the corridor from inappropriate development until a plan for the corridor could be developed.

With the need for a Broadway corridor plan clearly identified, the first steps in the planning effort were undertaken in the spring of 1999. Staff gathered background information and prepared maps of the study area. Information included current land use, vehicular circulation and traffic counts, and other physical characteristics of the area. Most importantly, an Advisory Committee was appointed by City Council to assist staff in the development of the corridor plan. The Advisory Committee included businesses and property owners along Broadway, representatives of adjacent neighborhoods, representatives of major institutions in the study area, and liaisons for City Council, the Planning and Zoning Commission, and the Historic Resources Commission.

Two major roles were assigned to the Advisory Committee:

- To provide advice to staff regarding the planning process and the content of the plan; and
- To provide information to and solicit input and participation from their constituents.

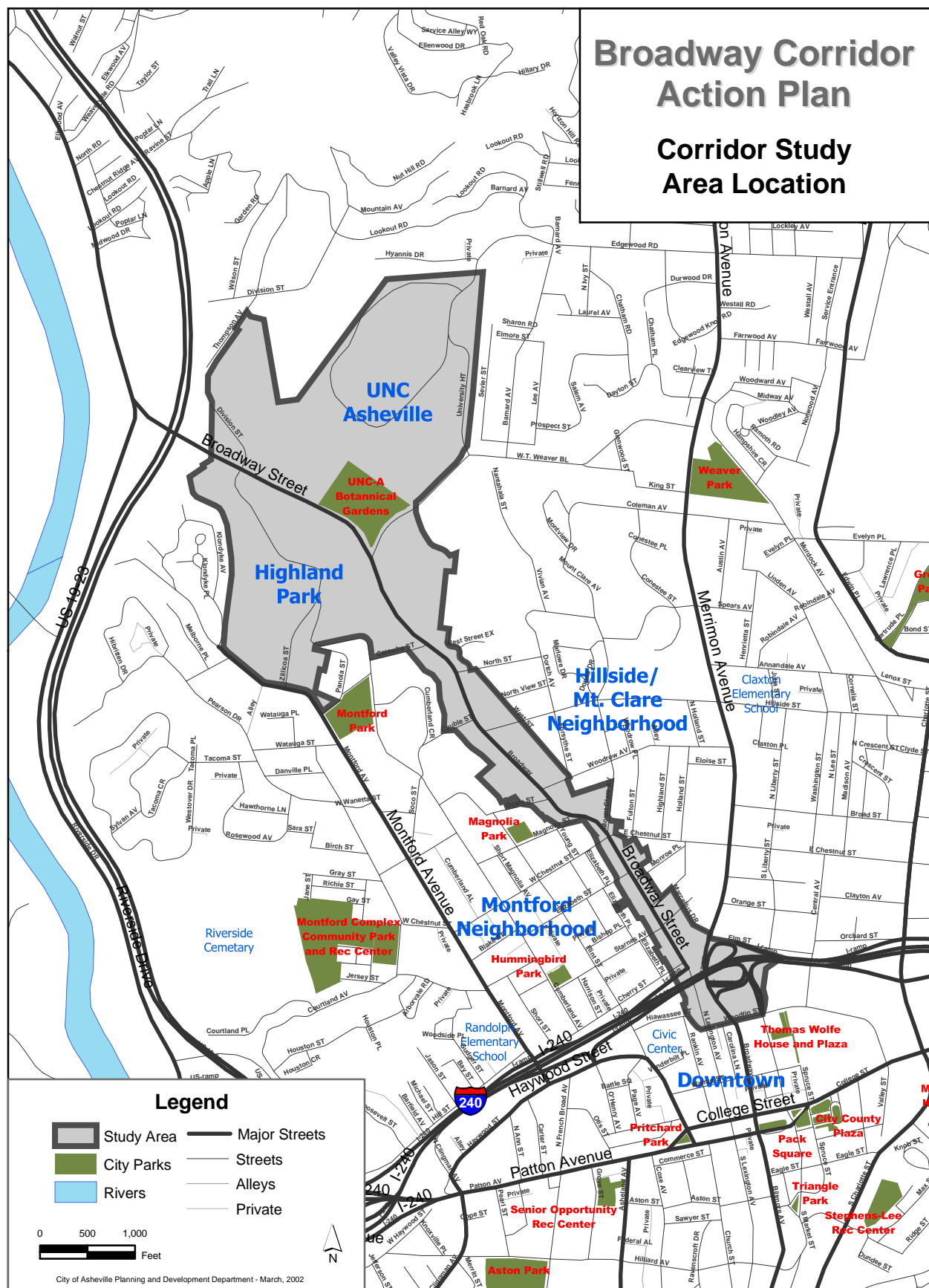
The Advisory Committee consisted of:

- Pamela Cauble, Off-Broadway Neighborhood
- Susan Roderick, Quality Forward
- Bob Lawrence, Business Owner
- David Dunn, Property Owner
- Tom Byers, UNCA
- Benson Slosman, Highland Park
- Dean Pistor, Property Owner
- John Best, Montford Neighborhood
- Louise Sheaffer, Hillside/Mount Clare Neighborhood
- Chuck Cloninger, City Council Liaison

- Will Williams, P&Z Liaison
- Bob Galloway, HRC Liaison

The Advisory Committee met monthly for seven (7) months to review information and to advise the City staff during the preparation of the plan. Two (2) community meetings were held to solicit additional input from the business and property owners and residents in the planning area. Approximately 40 interested citizens attended each of the community meetings. At the first meeting, citizens identified issues, concerns, and opportunities along the corridor. Using the information provided at the first meeting, staff developed draft strategies for guiding the future development of the Broadway corridor. The draft strategies were presented to interested citizens at the second community meeting, where attendees refined the draft strategies and identified additional strategies for guiding growth. The information provided by citizens at the community meetings was used extensively in the preparation of this plan.

To ensure that the strategies and recommendations included in the plan are consistent with the priorities of other City departments, a committee composed of staff from City operational departments was involved in the identification of the implementation strategies. The involvement of this staff committee in the planning process will help ensure the strategies identified in this plan will be implemented.



### Historical Development

Asheville was originally sited at the intersection of Native American trading paths when the area called the “land of the sky” was opened for European settlement in 1784. During the early part of the nineteenth century, western North Carolina mounted the first of many campaigns to strengthen the region’s links with other states. While the state as a whole suffered from inadequate land and water routes, the problem was especially intense in the rough western counties. As early as 1828 reformers urged the construction of railroads from the coastal ports of Beaufort and New Bern across western North Carolina to Tennessee—a vision that took more than fifty years to fulfill. A greater immediate benefit was the Buncombe Turnpike, (also known as Drovers’ Road), constructed between 1824 and 1828. Promoted by western legislators as a link between their constituents and eastern markets, the Turnpike ran north and west from Greenville, South Carolina to Greenville, Tennessee by way of Asheville, (via what is now known as Broadway Street). As a link in the Dixie Highway it connected the northern states with the tip of Florida.

The Buncombe Turnpike promptly became an artery of trade and change. This pathway was most likely chosen because it provided a gentle grade between the flood plains along the French Broad River. A great deal of traffic came in the form of drovers herding horses, mules, cattle, hogs, geese, ducks, and turkeys from North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky down the trail to markets southward. As many as 160,000 hogs were herded through Asheville in a single season. Wagonloads of deerskin and farm products also traveled down the road. Settlements sprang up to house the drovers and feed animals en route, providing a ready market for farmers and boosting corn production along the way.



Figure 1: S.D. Robinson Groceries and Feed Store, circa 1910, once sat on the corner of Broadway and East Street (now Mt. Clare). Photograph from the Penland Collection; courtesy of Evelyn Penland Blau.

Another type of traffic came up the turnpike from the low country: summer visitors. Previously a few South Carolinians had made the onerous journey to the cool North Carolina mountains, but the Buncombe Turnpike sped the transformation of the mountains into a summer resort area. With visitors arriving in the relative comfort of a carriage instead of a wagon, various points along the way developed into popular destinations (*A Guide to the Historic Architecture of Western North Carolina*, pages 25 –26).

At the corner of Broadway and East Street (now Mount Clare Avenue) sat S.D. Robinson Groceries and Feed Store. The 1920s marked the economic high point of Broadway, when practically all of the properties were developed. Some buildings dating from this period remain along Broadway, although a majority has been lost and the properties they previously occupied have remained vacant. Commercial buildings remain at 160-174, 201, 241 Broadway and 6 Mt. Clare Avenue. There is also a scattering of older residential structures remaining but many have been altered and are in poor condition. The most notable is a row of c. 1915-1925 frame houses located at 202-224 Broadway.

The decline of Broadway as a transportation corridor started in the mid-1930s when Merrimon was designated as a link in U.S. Highways 19, 23, 25 and 70, while Broadway carried passengers of N.C. Highways 63 and 191. The completion in the early 1970s of a four-lane limited access bypass for U.S. Highways 19, 23 and 70 going north severely diminished Broadway's function as the city's link to the north and west. Even more recently (1986), the redesign and reconstruction of the intersection of Broadway, Merrimon Avenue and I-240 disengaged Broadway's link to Downtown.

An important exception to this decline occurred in 1960 when Asheville-Biltmore College, now the University of North Carolina at Asheville, opened on a large campus bordering Broadway at the northern end of the study area. With the establishment of the college, Broadway became a link between it and the Downtown. The presence of the university has played an important role in stimulating projects that have contributed to the revitalization of Broadway, including the construction of W.T. Weaver Boulevard (1963) and the widening of Broadway (1995).

The Broadway widening project appeared in the 1975 Thoroughfare Plan as a part of a future principal arterial road. By 1993, studies and design plans for a five-lane road, 1.6 miles from US 19/23 to I-240, were completed by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and community members and presented to Asheville City Council. NCDOT could not construct an adjacent greenway requested by the City, but agreed to assist the City with right-of-way acquisition. Property along the right-of-way of Reed Creek was purchased by the NCDOT on behalf of the City of Asheville, with the City reimbursing NCDOT for the property cost. The construction was broken into two phases. The first phase, between Chestnut and I-240, was finished in 1992, and involved utilizing side-street parking spaces as two extra lanes. The second phase was between Chestnut and U.S. 19/23 and finished in 1995. It included four lanes and a 16-foot wide median strip incorporating several breaks for turning lanes.

### **Review of Existing Plans**

Broadway has been addressed in varying degrees in other plans prepared by or for the City of Asheville. Ranging from John Nolen's Asheville City Plan 1922 to every subsequent Transportation Improvement Plan since 1984, to the 1987 Asheville City Plan 2010, issues addressed in these plans are indicative of the evolution of Broadway and the transportation role it plays in the city. Spanning a period of approximately 70 years, the recommendations and proposals presented in these plans have provided a foundation for future *actions* on Broadway.

The Asheville City Plan 1922, prepared by Nolen, was the first plan to address Asheville's growth and development from a comprehensive perspective. In this plan, Nolen addressed the challenges and needs facing a rapidly growing community. Broadway, at the time of the city plan, was a link in the Dixie Highway as "the main trunk highway through Asheville . . ." (Nolen). Recommended improvements for the Broadway corridor included in the Asheville City Plan 1922 are:

- Widen the Broadway right-of-way from 44 feet to 80 feet;
- Develop Spring Parkway, a greenway, along the west side of Broadway extending from Chestnut Street north to connect with the proposed Country Park (current site of the University of North Carolina at Asheville);
- Improve the intersection at Chestnut and Mt. Clare Streets and Broadway by providing a traffic circle called "Chestnut Circle;" and
- Develop Chestnut Circle as a neighborhood commercial center for northern residents.





Figure 2: Illustration from Asheville City Plan 1922. Courtesy of the City of Asheville Planning and Development Department.

Following Nolen's plan was Wilbur, Smith and Associates' proposed 1961 Thoroughfare Plan. This plan recommended that Broadway be widened along its entire length to a four-lane section to complement the Charlotte Street-Murdock-King Street Connector. This connector was envisioned as a widening of Murdock Avenue from Charlotte Street to Merrimon Avenue, with an improved connection to King Street. Widening of King Street was also proposed to provide a vehicle-friendly connection between Charlotte Street and US 19/23.

The Broadway corridor was next addressed in a comprehensive manner in the Asheville City Plan 2010, adopted by Asheville City Council in 1987. The plan designated Broadway as a "proposed major thoroughfare" and, like Nolen's, recommended a width of 80 feet. The 2010 plan also recommended a greenway along the west side of Broadway as the first corridor link of a citywide greenway system. With respect to future land use, this plan called for:

- Institutional uses at the northern end of Broadway covering the sites of Highland Hospital, UNC-A and the U.S. Forest Service research facility;
- Mixed uses from Five Points to I-240; tiers of open space on the west side; institutional uses on the east side; low density residential uses on both sides between Five Points and the institutional districts to the north; and
- A greenway along the west side of the Broadway expansion connecting UNCA to Downtown Asheville with institutional expansion along the east side.

Many goals identified for the areas designated Urban Center and Fringe by the 2010 Plan can benefit the Broadway corridor. The proposed Urban Center area overlaps Broadway north to I-240; the Urban Fringe area overlaps Broadway from I-240 north to Chestnut Street and includes the following goals:

- Expansion of the Urban Center supporting cultural, retail, institutional, residential, small business, financial and commercial activities;
- Redesign of existing parks and creation of new urban parks as outlined in the 1986 Urban Design Action Plan;
- Medium to High Density Residential Development through adaptive reuse, new compatible construction and infill opportunities creating an urban neighborhood; and
- Neighborhood trading (grocers, laundry, drugstore, public utilities, small business, offices) supporting urban neighborhood activities.

The Campus Master Plan for the University of North Carolina at Asheville, developed by the consulting firm Wallace, Roberts & Todd in July of 1997, relies on the development of Broadway to enhance their campus. The campus occupies approximately 265 acres, with 2,500 feet of frontage on Broadway. Goals for the UNCA Master Plan involving the City and Broadway include:

- Land Use – Consider locating ancillary functions that will generate large volumes of traffic on the University property south of W.T. Weaver Blvd., to take advantage of the accessibility of this property from Broadway and U.S. 19/23, and to minimize traffic impacts of these functions on the campus.
- Traffic Circulation and Parking – Provide convenient, sheltered bus stops on-campus to encourage use of public transit. Cooperate with off-campus transit providers to improve public transit service for commuter students.
- Traffic Circulation and Parking – Construct an extension to Division Street along the northern side of campus to connect with a new entrance directly to Broadway, which will provide direct access to the north side of campus.

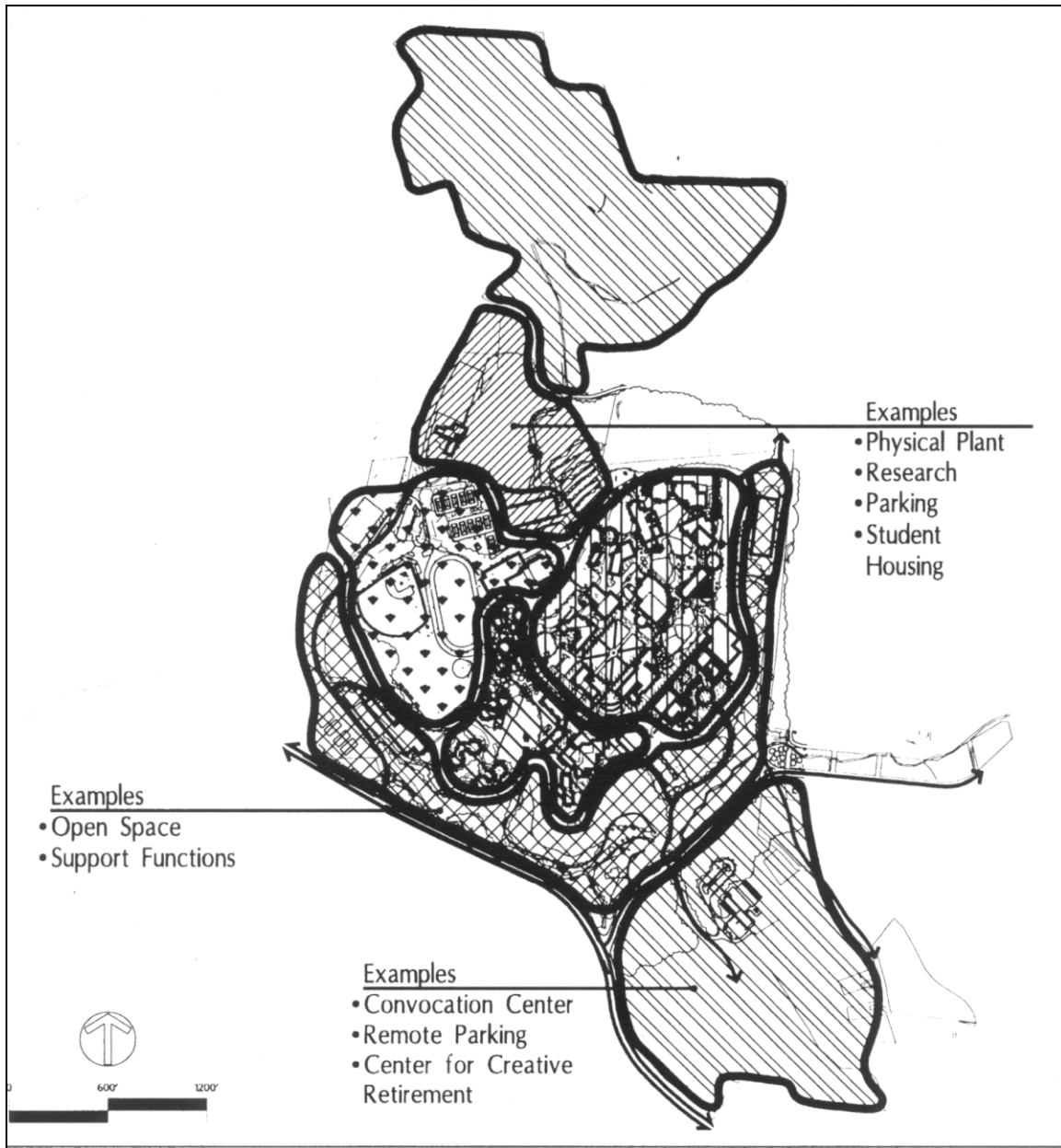


Figure 3: Illustration from the University of North Carolina at Asheville Land Use Plan. Courtesy of UNCA.

The Asheville Greenways Master Plan, prepared in 1998 by the Trust for Public Land and Greenways Incorporated, addressed the transportation, environmental, health, recreation, economic and educational benefits offered by greenways. The plan proposed 14 corridors as the primary greenway system for Asheville. The Reed Creek/Broadway greenway would finish an "emerald necklace" system with the other 13 Downtown greenway corridors. On-road and off-road sections are included in this corridor that extend along one or both sides of Broadway from the Town Mountain Road corridor north to the French Broad River corridor. This greenway would link with Kimberly Avenue via the existing greenway along W.T. Weaver Boulevard. Connections would also be made through the UNCA campus, historic neighborhoods, the French Broad River and Downtown.

The Greenways Master Plan proposed 5 different greenway development levels. Survey results from over 400 telephone calls and community meetings revealed respondents chose greenway level 3, unpaved multi-use trails, as the most appropriate level of greenway for Reed Creek/Broadway. Level 3: Multi-use unpaved trail development applies to potential greenway corridors where the adjacent natural areas, rural landscapes or historic sites might dictate a more natural facility development objective. Unpaved trails surfaced with compacted crushed stone (10-12 feet wide) could be used by bicyclists, joggers, equestrians, wheelchair users, and persons with strollers. Trail Head facilities and other amenities (benches, signage, picnic tables) would be developed where appropriate.

**Corridor Objectives:** Aside from the proposed corridor's role as a recreation and transportation route, it can help improve water quality, conserve riparian habitat and reduce the impacts of flooding along Reed Creek.

The Pedestrian Thoroughfare Plan, adopted in May, 1999 by Asheville City Council, served as a basis for pedestrian planning and identified sidewalk maintenance objectives. The Broadway corridor is addressed through Pedestrian Thoroughfare Area Map C, with symbols for sidewalk obstacles, needed ADA ramps, needed pedestrian linkages, existing sidewalks needing maintenance, existing compliant sidewalk, proposed crossing improvements, and pedestrian hazard zones. These identified problems can be referenced in the Broadway Corridor Action Plan Map E.

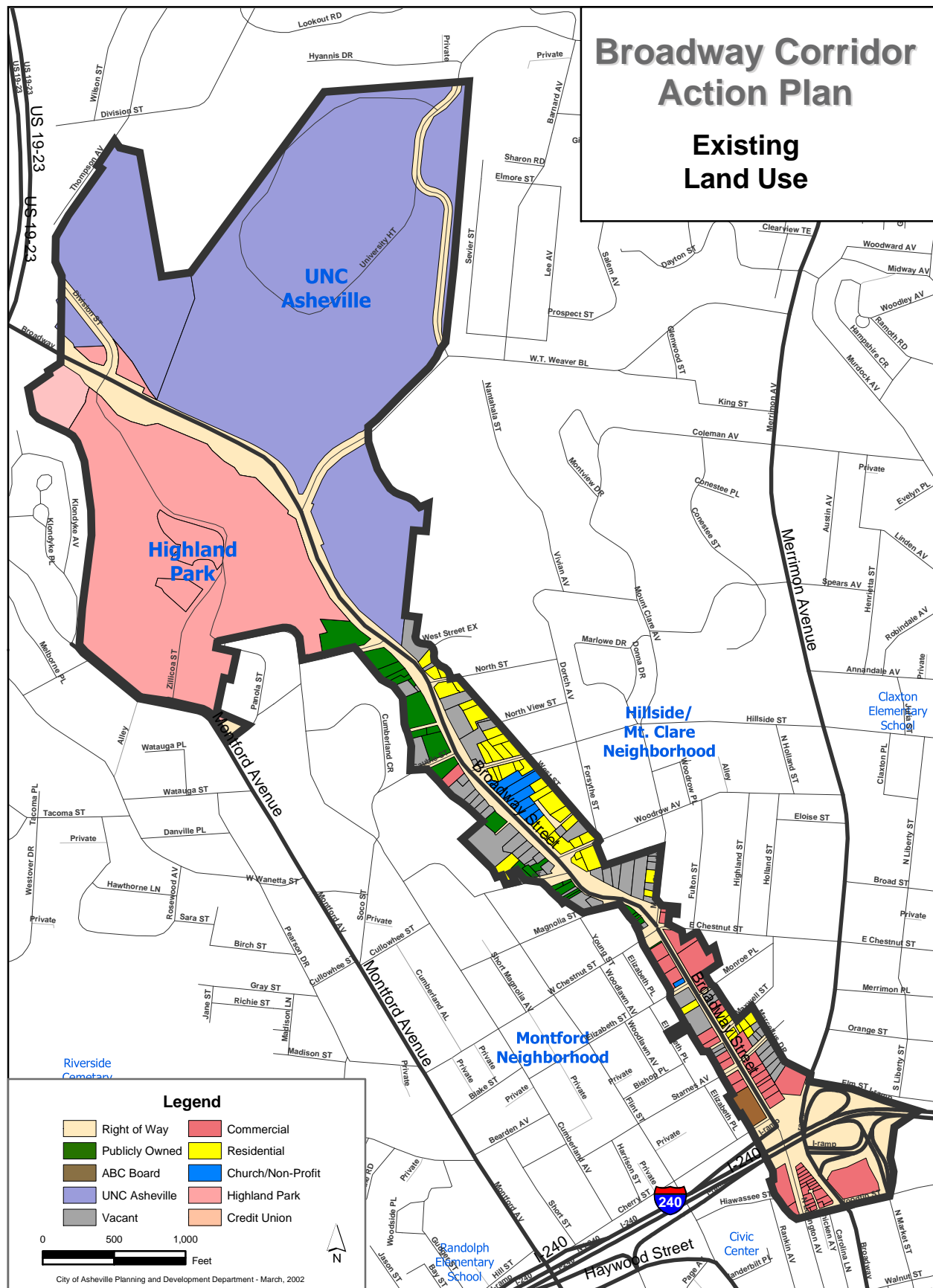
### **Land Use and Current Issues**

The Broadway Corridor Study Area contains a wide range of land uses within a mile of the corridor, including non-residential uses that provide institutional, office, restaurant and retail services to the surrounding community. In general, the southern end of the corridor (Woodfin/Lexington/Hiwassee Streets' intersection north to approximately Chestnut Street) contains the broadest mix of land uses. While predominantly commercial, nearly 10% of the land use is residential. This section also contains large pockets of vacant property. The northern end of the corridor (Chestnut Street north to 19/23 Highway) contains the largest amount of developable vacant land, which accounts for 60% of the northern end.

The southern end of the Broadway Corridor serves the community and Downtown. The interest in Downtown revitalization inspired five new businesses to utilize vacant buildings between Woodfin and I-240. Aside from this enhanced block, Broadway is severed from Downtown by private parking, the I-240 overpass, and an unkempt right-of-way surrounded by a metal link fence. Continuing north on Broadway is a mix of both contemporary and historic commercial buildings and historic residences. Many of the remaining historic structures have been altered and are in a disheveled appearance. Single-family, multi-family and mixed uses are developed in the older residences south of Chestnut Street. Beyond Monroe and Elizabeth Street intersections are successful businesses, including a restaurant and an auto parts store, catering to both the community and Downtown. The businesses cater to vehicular traffic rather than pedestrians by locating the parking lots adjacent to the street. The land use in this portion of the corridor is directed to serve all types of traffic and needs.

The northern end of the Broadway corridor has stalled in its development due to current City zoning, which was intended to protect vacant lots from inappropriate development. Currently, a gas station is located at the corner of Broadway and Cauble Street and a handful of single-family residential homes are located north of Chestnut Street bordering Broadway. The City of Asheville/Buncombe County, Highland Park, UNCA and private owners hold the remaining properties, which remain undeveloped and have high potential for development.









Underlying all of the recommendations in the corridor plan is the assumption that Broadway has reached its ultimate width. The Broadway Corridor Plan envisions buildings that front on and relate to the public space of street in order to promote pedestrian activity. One of the barriers to achieving this uniform arrangement of buildings on the street is the fact that large swaths of land adjacent to the boulevard, between Chestnut Street and US 19/23 are considered right of way, and are under ownership of the North Carolina Department of Transportation. Because no further road widening is recommended, the excess right of way should be made available for development. The property should be made available to adjacent property owners in accordance with NCDOT procedures. A new or overlay zoning district for the Broadway Corridor should be developed to ensure the appropriate development of the corridor.

The development of a new district creates an opportunity for City of Asheville to work cooperatively with the development community to achieve the goals of this plan. In exchange for the creation of an district permitting a wider range of uses, developers would be required to build the type of buildings that relate to the street, create a pedestrian streetscape, and define the boulevard as a gateway to the heart of Asheville. In addition, transportation objectives would be upheld by limiting the number of driveways and access points to the thoroughfare. Developers with an interest in creating pedestrian oriented buildings on Broadway should be willing to provide superior building design and offer pedestrian improvements and pedestrian amenities in exchange for having a wider range of development options.

Broadway is primarily a business corridor although there are some residential neighborhoods along the corridor, as well as opportunities for additional residential development. Actions recommended in this plan are designed to promote mixed-use development of vacant sites and redevelopment or reuse of underutilized properties. With the appropriate type of land uses along the corridor, this gateway will present a positive image of Asheville's unique qualities that make the City such an attractive place to live and visit.

**Issues**

- Concerns about the quality of new development, both residential and non-residential
- Need for neighborhood retail services to support the area's residential neighborhoods
- Concerns about used car lots, small strip retail, and commercial franchises
- Protection and preservation of surrounding neighborhoods, such as Hillside/Mt. Clare and Montford
- Reuse of vacant buildings between Chestnut Avenue and I-240

**Opportunities**

- Properties available for new development throughout the corridor
- Vacant residential and commercial buildings throughout the corridor
- Mixed-use development as a transition between commercial downtown and residential neighborhoods
- Second-story residences promote security and safety in evening hours
- Adjacent residential neighborhoods provide substantial customer base

**Objectives**

- Create a high quality development environment along Broadway that promotes a range of residential, office, and retail uses while linking adjacent downtown, residential and institutional uses
- Promote the development of vacant land and the reuse of underutilized properties
- Encourage more retail/commercial and mixed-use development on key sites between Chestnut and Lexington/Walnut Streets
- Encourage more residential and mixed-use development on key sites between Catawba and Chestnut Streets
- Encourage more institutional and mixed-use development on key sites between Highway 19/23 and Catawba Street
- Preserve, maintain and enhance the neighborhoods surrounding the corridor
- Provide retail services, focusing on the needs of surrounding neighborhoods
- Actively involve the private sector in redevelopment of the Broadway corridor



Figures 7 and 8: Existing residential and commercial uses along Broadway.

### **Zoning Districts**

Properties within the Broadway Corridor have been assigned zoning designations that generally correspond to the variety of land uses found along the corridor. Previous zoning designations permitted uses that were not compatible with adjacent residential neighborhoods and the retail uses in Downtown. Asheville's first zoning ordinance, adopted in 1948, designated the Broadway corridor area as a "Business" district from Catawba Street south to Downtown. North of Catawba, Broadway was zoned RA-6, a medium density residential district. In 1950, the 1948 zoning ordinance was amended to change the Business District to a "Commercial" district. This district was intended for a wider range of commercial uses including wholesale, distribution and light manufacturing. By 1979, the Commercial district was expanded along Broadway to Riverside Drive including the properties originally zoned RA-6. The current zoning designations were assigned to promote compatible development along this gateway to the Downtown. Land uses along the corridor include non-residential uses that provided a variety of services to the community and residential uses. The current zoning of the corridor has made some of the uses non-conforming as it attempts to promote development that will enhance the community. The City identified the following goals in assigning the current zoning designations:

- To encourage development that would be in scale with existing development along the corridor and adjacent to the corridor, particularly the south end of the corridor from Chestnut Street to Downtown;
- To encourage land uses that would serve pedestrian traffic from the adjacent neighborhoods and vehicular traffic from the entire city;
- To permit the continued growth and development of the large institutional and office uses on the south end of the corridor (UNCA and Highland Park); and
- To forestall inappropriate development on the portion of the corridor between Chestnut Street and the UNCA and Highland Park properties until a planning process could identify appropriate land uses and development patterns for this portion of the corridor.

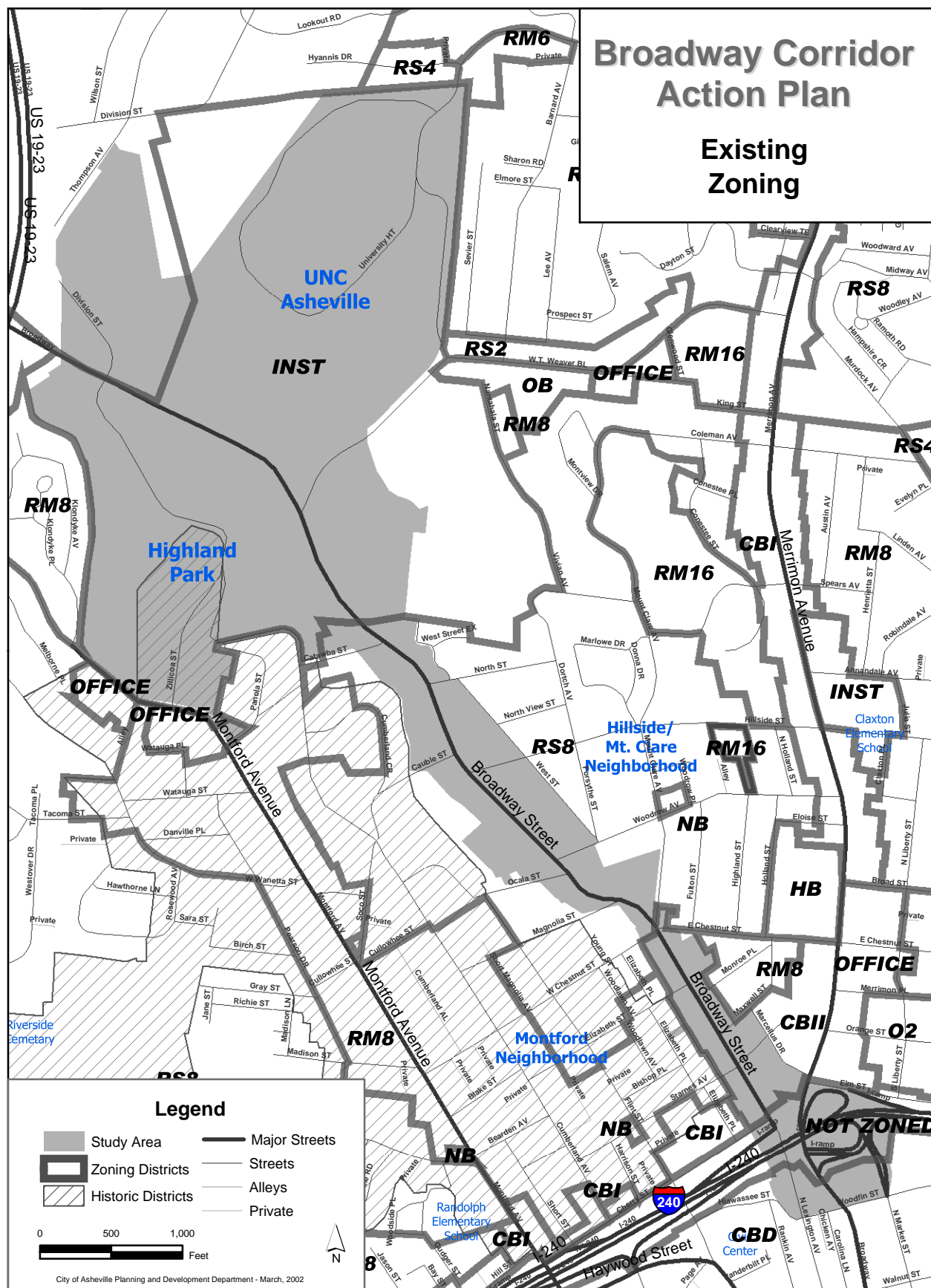
The portion of the corridor located south of I-240 is zoned Central Business District (CBD) in acknowledgement that this area serves as the edge of Downtown. A wide mixture of business, office, and institutional uses, as well as multi-family residential, is permitted in this zoning district. The CBD encourages a strong retail center along with high-density residential development that will complement other Downtown uses and the surrounding neighborhoods. Pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and vehicular traffic are important in creating a balanced transportation system, which is a key to supporting the mixture of uses permitted in this district. Development standards permit dense development with structures permitted to cover the entire lot with no off-street parking

requirements. Structures must be at least 20 feet tall and must incorporate windows, doors, or other openings on the first floor to complement pedestrian activity.

The section of the corridor from I-240 north to Chestnut Street is zoned Community Business II (CB II). This district provides for medium to high-density business and service uses serving several neighborhoods. Land uses in this district need to be sensitive to a significant pedestrian population but also provide for adequate and safe vehicular access. The application of the CB II district along this part of the corridor recognized the proximity of adjacent neighborhoods and was intended to encourage pedestrian traffic while also accommodating vehicular traffic. As required by the CB II district, parking must be located at the side or rear of buildings and a 20% reduction in required off-street parking is permitted. A maximum gross floor area of 45,000 square feet is permitted for structures in the district.

The portion of the corridor from Five Points (Chestnut Street) north to the UNCA and Highland Park properties is designated RS-8, a single-family residential zone. The RS-8 district establishes a medium density, single-family zone meant to stabilize and protect the district's residential character. Adoption of the current UDO in 1997 made two uses in this district non-conforming, a commercial building at the corner of Broadway and Magnolia Street and a convenience store at the corner of Broadway and Cauble Street. City Council assigned this zoning classification to this section of the corridor in an effort to forestall inappropriate development until a planning process could be completed to identify compatible land uses. The north end of the corridor, consisting of properties owned by UNCA and Highland Park, LLC, is zoned Institutional, which accommodates educational, medical, and public service developments as well as a variety of office uses. Application of this district was intended to recognize the value of the UNCA and Highland Park facilities and the need for these institutions to continue to be able to expand along Broadway.

In addition to the standards for the corridor established by the various zoning classifications, a portion of the Broadway corridor falls within Downtown Design Review area. The Downtown Design Review guidelines were established to ensure renovation and new construction are compatible with the character of downtown Asheville. The Downtown Design Review program calls for mandatory review while compliance with the guidelines is voluntary. The design review area is divided into three sub-areas by the guidelines: the core area, periphery areas, and gateway corridors. The portion of the Broadway corridor study area located south of I-240 is within the core area, while the portion located between I-240 and Chestnut Street is designated as a gateway corridor and is within the periphery area. As a result, all development within the corridor area from Hiwassee Street north to Chestnut Street is subject to Downtown Design Review.



### **Traffic and Pedestrian Circulation and Current Issues**

Streets and Auto Circulation: Broadway's history as a major transportation corridor in the Asheville area is well established. From its beginning as a trail for driving livestock to market to its prominence as a highway linking states together, Broadway has served an important role of moving people and goods. Several significant changes in traffic circulation have occurred:

- In the late 1800s Merrimon Avenue surpassed Broadway as the main corridor for transportation north of Asheville. Broadway carried less prominent traffic destinations to the north. Development decreased on Broadway, resulting in an early blight.
- A new interstate highway system was constructed in the Asheville area in the 1960s and 1970s. The four-lane limited access bypass, I-240, connected with U.S. Highways 19, 23, and 70 going north, further diminishing Broadway's function as Asheville's link to the north and west.
- The Asheville-Biltmore College, now the University of North Carolina at Asheville (UNCA), opened in 1960 at the northern end of the study area. With the construction of new facilities, Broadway became the major link between Downtown and the school.
- The 1986 redesign and reconstruction of I-240's intersection with Broadway severed connection with Downtown. Broadway was reconnected with Lexington, and Merrimon connected with the south end (Downtown section) of Broadway through the center of Downtown.
- The North Carolina Division of Transportation (NCDOT) widened Broadway between Chestnut and US 19/23 in the early 1990s, for the purpose of a future principal arterial road. The widened portion consists of four travel lanes, each 12-feet wide, with left-turn lanes within 16-foot wide planted medians. The widening severed connections between neighborhoods by making pedestrian crossing more dangerous.



Figures 9 and 10: Widened portion of Broadway with expansive lanes and planted median.

There is no question that Broadway's transportation role will continue. Examination of the 1994 *Asheville Urban Area Thoroughfare Plan* indicates major transportation corridors surround Broadway. Broadway links together US 19/23 with UNCA, Interstate 240 and Downtown Asheville, which together are utilized by about 80,000 cars per day. The Broadway Corridor is connected to both major arterial freeways, carrying almost 4,000 cars per day, according to the most recent traffic counts. (Refer to the Traffic Count data sheet.) The completion of Interstate 26 will reinforce this strong tie between two limited access freeways, and at the same time will create an opportunity for Broadway to serve as the prominent gateway to Downtown Asheville from the north.

Although no widening improvements are recommended for the corridor, one notable transportation improvement project is necessary. Any driver who encounters the interchange of Broadway, I-240 and Merrimon Avenue quickly becomes familiar with the challenges of this interchange. For years this interchange has been given labels like "dysfunction junction" for its frustrating lack of connections, and for its obvious safety shortcomings on the on-ramps to I-240 East. Visitors are often further confounded by the confusing arrangement of the street names. At least some of these problems are fixable.

The North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) has identified this interchange as a project in its Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). NCDOT developed some preliminary designs for the interchange, held a meeting to gather public input, and is now in the process of selecting detailed study alternatives. City staff is providing ongoing input to NCDOT in the development of this project. Part of the input, includes relating the following goals of this plan to the NCDOT: 1) Improve the safety for those entering and exiting I-240, 2) Maintain and enhance the link between Lexington and Broadway, including pedestrian linkages, and 3) Provide an improved link between Broadway and Broadway. Because this interchange is such an important link in Asheville, City Council should adopt a resolution requesting the opportunity to review and approve the final design for the interchange.

In discussing the future of Broadway as a transportation corridor, it is important to reiterate the corridor has two sections that are distinct in character and function. The southern section of Broadway, from I-240 north to Chestnut Street, is a four lane undivided roadway section, providing access to a number of businesses that are clustered closely to the street. North of Chestnut, the character of Broadway changes to a four-lane divided roadway section with a planted median, relatively few driveways, and sparse development on the abutting land.

The intersection of Broadway, Chestnut and Mount Clare (Five Points), serves as a defining break in these two sections. This intersection would be well served by the installation of a roundabout or some other means to visually and functionally separate the two sections of Broadway. In addition, it is possible that this location could be the trailhead for the Broadway Greenway. Although the design has not been determined, the Greenway could transition from an off-street greenway to an on-street Greenway at the Five Points location. The fact that the north section of Broadway has a greenway planned for one side illustrates another important difference between the two sections of the corridor. South of Chestnut Street, more businesses exist on both sides of the street resulting in greater potential for development on both the east and west sides of Broadway. With this potential comes the opportunity for this section of Broadway to become an extension of downtown. The type of development relating to the public space of the street could create a streetscape with the look and function of a downtown street.

It is important for Broadway to avoid the fate of many other multi-lane thoroughfares in the Asheville area and throughout the country. Too often, these major arteries are widened to relieve traffic congestion, only to find that the congestion returns a few years later when the corridor is lined with automobile oriented businesses, frequent driveway cuts, and inappropriately spaced traffic signals. Corridors like Broadway inevitably serve two separate functions. The thoroughfare serves as an artery to move traffic, and also to provide access to businesses. Problems occur when the balance between these two functions is not properly managed, and as a result of poor access management, these corridors fail to adequately serve either function. To avoid this, access to new businesses along Broadway should be aggressively managed. Wherever possible, access should occur from side streets, rather than from driveways connecting to the thoroughfare. Consideration should be taken, however, to avoid locating commercial driveways on residential streets. In cases where access from a side street is not possible, shared driveways and shared parking should be utilized. In general, most new developments should be limited to a maximum of one driveway connection. As detailed in the land use and streetscape sections of this plan, the parking should be placed behind the buildings that front on Broadway. This pattern of development would serve not only to enhance the appearance and function of the corridor, but also to promote pedestrian activity.

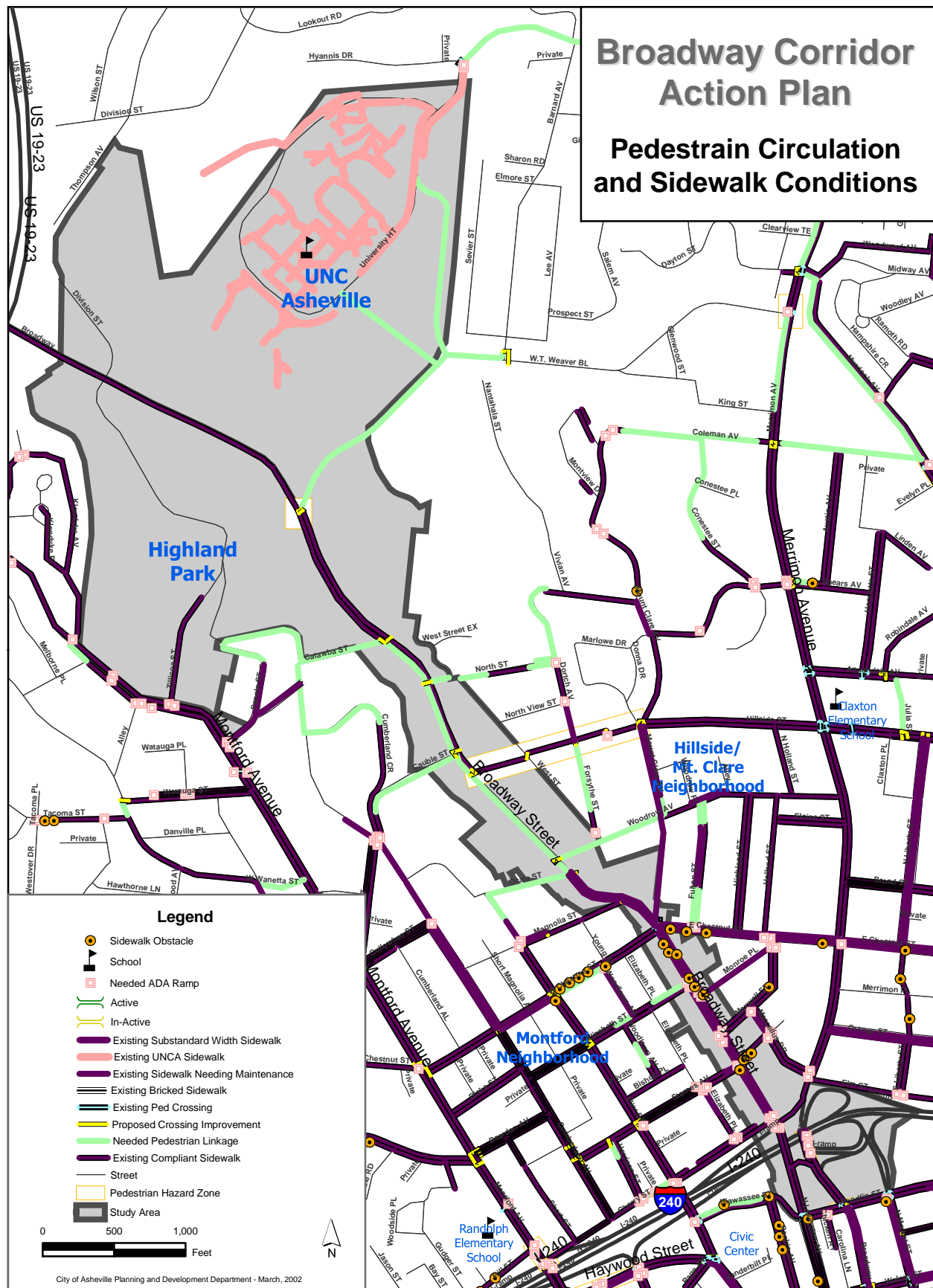


Underlying all of the recommendations in the corridor plan is the assumption that no additional travel lanes will be added to either section of Broadway. The section north of Broadway with the landscaped median should remain essentially unchanged. However, the widening project of the 1980s left some unneeded median breaks and turning lanes, and created some additional pedestrian safety needs that should be addressed. These issues go hand in hand and by removing the unnecessary median break and turning lanes, additional area can be created for pedestrian refuges in the middle of the roadway. The left turn bays that should be closed are at the intersection of Broadway and W.T. Weaver Boulevard, and the intersection of Broadway and North Street. In addition, a pedestrian refuge area should be created in the median of Broadway at the intersection of Broadway and Hillside Street. A short median should also be constructed as a pedestrian refuge area on Broadway at the south side of Woodrow Street.

Pedestrian Circulation: Observation indicates that a good deal of pedestrian circulation occurs along Broadway, but disperses north after Chestnut Street. Residents living on Broadway or side streets utilize the sidewalks along both sides of the street to walk downtown or into adjacent neighborhoods. The width and condition of sidewalks in the area is varied. The sidewalks from Hiwassee/Walnut Streets north to Chestnut Street average a width of four feet and are obstructed with utility poles, signs, parking meters, fire hydrants, and parked cars. These older sidewalks range from poor to good condition. Sidewalks are present from Chestnut Street north to US 19/23, from Catawba Street north to Cumberland, and North Street north to WT Weaver Boulevard. These six-foot wide sections are products of the widening project, but are poorly maintained. No other sidewalks exist along this strip of corridor and there is a lack of pedestrian crosswalks. These situations pose a serious threat to the safety of pedestrians using Broadway.

Factors affecting pedestrian safety sometimes involve the physical aspects of the walking experience. The elderly or handicapped produce special considerations and concerns as they may have limited range of movement or may use wheelchairs. Accommodations such as gradual slopes and curb ramps would greatly improve the mobility and safety for these special citizens. The Asheville Standards and Specifications Manual requires all new sidewalks to be at least five feet wide and have ADA ramps at all intersections and driveways. These new standards allow reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities as well as all pedestrians. Existing sidewalks between Hiwassee/Walnut Streets north to Chestnut Street do not meet these standards.

In addition to the median closings for pedestrian refuge, additional pedestrian safety improvements are needed throughout the corridor. Marked pedestrian crosswalks are needed at the following intersections: Broadway and W.T. Weaver Boulevard, Broadway and Hillside Street, Broadway and Chestnut/Mt. Clare (Five Points), Broadway and North Street. Pedestrian crossing signals are needed at Broadway and W.T. Weaver, and at Broadway and Chestnut.



With the right mix of pedestrian-oriented businesses, the Broadway corridor would allow residents of adjacent neighborhoods to access needed goods and services without using cars. Although it is unrealistic to expect everyone to walk to nearby shopping and services, even small reductions in auto trips can provide benefits in the form of reduced traffic congestion and pollution. In addition, with the appropriate land use pattern, even those who choose to drive to businesses along the corridor will have the option to park in one location and walk to several businesses without moving their cars. This is in contrast to the typical strip development pattern where each business is isolated, and patrons must drive to each individual business. As stated previously, the reduction of these short auto trips provides multiple benefits. The less someone has to drive from one business to the next, the less traffic congestion there will be on the roadway. Also, the elimination of some shorter car trips provides a great benefit to air quality, since a few short trips in the car produce more pollution than one longer trip, because cars create the most pollution in the first two minutes after they are started.

**Bicycle Circulation:** Many residents of surrounding neighborhoods and UNCA students use Broadway vehicular paths to access downtown by bicycle. This route is more attractive to cyclists than other parallel corridors due to lower traffic volumes and relatively flat gradients. However, high vehicle speeds are potentially hazardous to cyclists; observed traffic speeds average 45 mph on the widened portion and 30-mph from Chestnut Street south to Hiwassee Street. In addition, lane widths south of Chestnut are too narrow for motorists and bicyclists to share.



Figure 11: A potentially hazardous route for a Broadway bicyclist.

**Public Transportation:** There is currently no transit route serving the corridor. Residents of adjacent neighborhoods must travel several blocks to Route 11, Montford/Klondyke/Hillcrest, or Route 2, Merrimon Avenue.

Special Challenges: Along the section of Broadway between Chestnut and I-240 parking is limited and sidewalks are narrow and are obstructed by utility poles. Alternative lane configurations should be explored for this section of Broadway. The alternatives should provide opportunities for increased on-street parking and allow opportunities to widen sidewalks and provide streetscape improvements. All streetscape projects and development projects in the Broadway corridor should place utilities underground whenever feasible. Alternatives should also allow for the possibility of an on-street Greenway south of the Five Points location. This section of Broadway would also greatly benefit from shared off-street parking. It may be possible that a public/private partnership could provide a shared parking lot that would serve both businesses and the trailhead to the Greenway.

With these transportation improvements, pedestrian safety improvements, and streetscape enhancements, Broadway will continue to serve as a primary artery from the new I-26 and UNCA to I-240 and the heart of Downtown Asheville. This function as a gateway corridor should be further defined through appropriate signage from I-26 that identifies Broadway as a primary route to Downtown Asheville. The multi-modal transportation system serving Broadway corridor businesses and neighborhoods should be enhanced and well maintained, and should provide access to major destinations for safe and convenient travel.

### Issues

- Limited pedestrian amenities (crosswalks, sidewalks, lighting, medians)
- Limited ADA standard sidewalks
- Poor sidewalk maintenance
- Poor vehicular traffic flow at Broadway/Merrimon/I-240 and Five Points intersections
- Width of lanes do not provide for safe U-turn opportunities
- Lack of transit service
- Lack of designated bike lanes

### Opportunities

- Potential for transit service to link with Broadway
- Corridor is a major connector between Downtown and UNCA
- Greenway from Downtown to the French Broad River
- Potential for enhanced pedestrian/bicycle use
- Serve as Gateway to Downtown

### Objectives

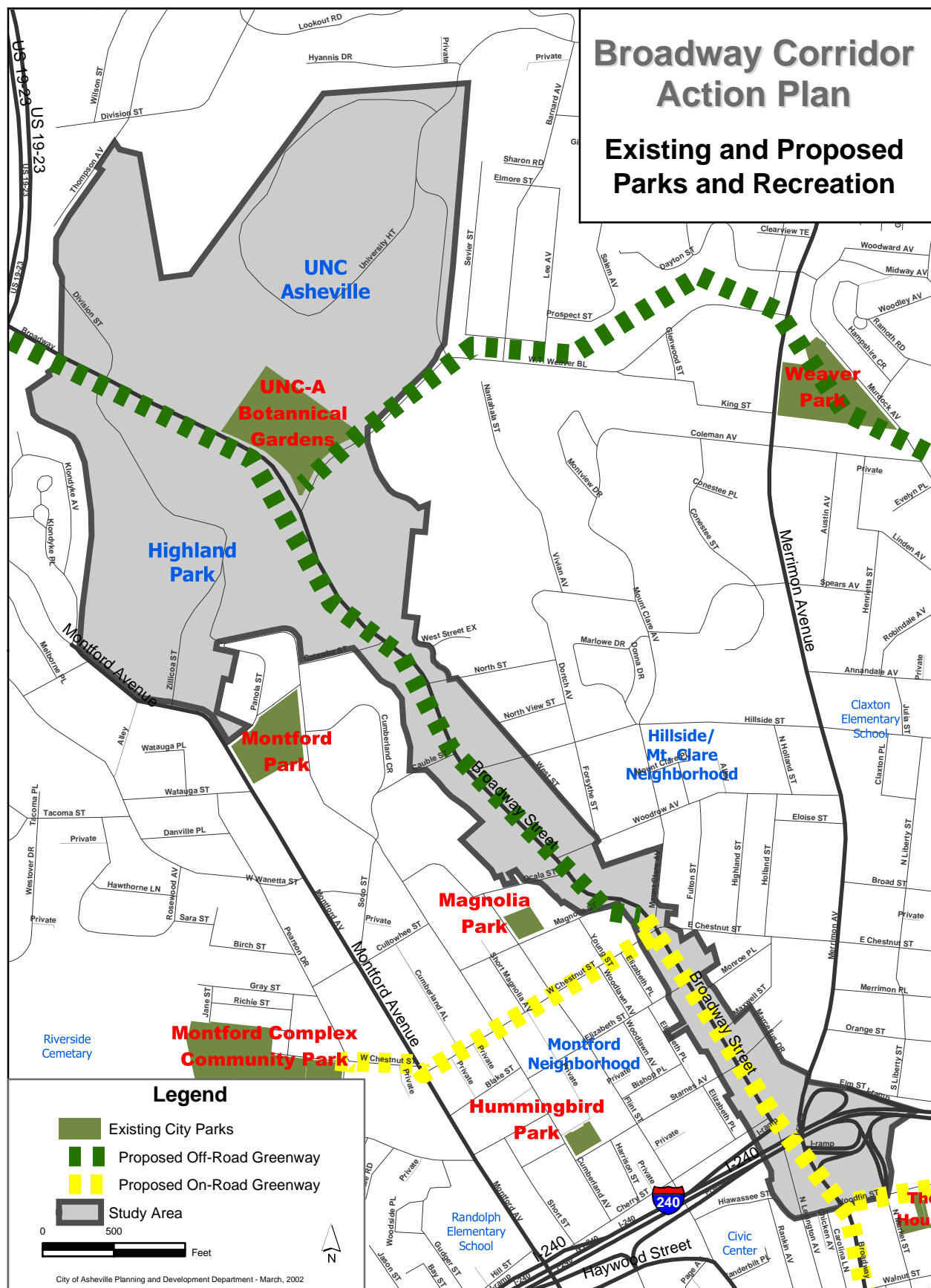
- Foster and develop a more pedestrian-friendly environment
- Provide transit service and amenities along Broadway
- Provide for the safe and efficient movement of vehicular traffic
- Provide opportunities for on-street parking on Broadway between I-240 and Chestnut Street
- Provide shared business entrances
- Provide a designated bike lane or signs indicating bike usage
- Provide pedestrian crosswalks for enhanced pedestrian movement
- Construction of the Reed Creek Greenway parallel to Broadway

### **Parks and Recreation and Current Issues**

The proposed Greenway along Broadway will help protect the cultural, historic, and environmental resources located along the corridor. Broadway has served as a main arterial road since Asheville's beginning and has attributed to the culture and history of the City and is bordered by two of Asheville's first neighborhoods, Montford and Hillside/Mt. Clare. Many residents of these neighborhoods currently rely on Broadway as a pedestrian and bicycle route to Downtown and the Greenway would provide a path on Broadway for these travelers. Almost one mile long, the Greenway along Broadway would also be a major pedestrian and bicycle link from UNCA and the French Broad River to Downtown. Another purpose of the Broadway Greenway would be to help create an "emerald necklace" of green space encircling downtown and provide North Asheville with an environmental resource.

Current recreational opportunities within the Broadway corridor are limited, with the UNCA Botanical Gardens, located on the northeast end of Broadway, as the only recreational space within the study area. It contains benches, lawn areas, and strolling pathways along Glenn's and Reed Creeks, but remains its own entity within the college boundaries. Just outside the study area, the City has established the W.T. Weaver Boulevard Greenway, less than half a mile long, adjacent to the University of North Carolina at Asheville campus.

This "emerald necklace" mentioned previously would be comprised of the French Broad River on the west, Nasty Branch on the south, and Asheland/McDowell and Broadway/Reed Creek on the east and north. Reed Creek is a neglected waterway that flows into the French Broad River and is surrounded by an abundance of potential off-road pathways. This would be a model project in Asheville, as only two other greenways (W.T. Weaver Blvd. and partially finished French Broad River) currently exist in the City. Although the final design has not been determined, the Greenway could transition from an off-street greenway to an on-street Greenway at the Five Points location, where a possible trailhead for the Greenway could be established. The following issues and objectives will be used in conjunction with the Greenways Master Plan when deriving Action Steps.



**Issues**

- Safety hazards for pedestrians using inadequate sidewalk system
- North Asheville residents in need of parks and recreation areas
- City of Asheville in need of a continuous greenway system

**Opportunities**

- Finished greenway will be a model project for other greenways
- Will be one of the first sections of the "emerald necklace" encircling downtown
- Increase adjacent property values, tourist revenues, and cost savings for public services

**Objectives**

- Provide residents a choice in mode of travel to downtown and other neighborhoods
- Provide a buffered zone for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Improve the water quality and floodplain of Reed Creek
- Serve as a downtown habitat for many species of plants and wildlife

**Action Steps and Implementation**

<b><u>Land Use Action Steps</u></b>	<b><u>Time Frame</u></b>	<b><u>Responsibility</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an inventory of the major vacant/underutilized properties throughout the corridor and work with area real estate brokers, and other organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, to adequately market development opportunities.</li> </ul>	1-2 years	Planning and Development Department City Economic Development Office
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with realtors, property owners, and developers to ensure that future residential/nonresidential development and building reuse is well designed to enhance the corridor, using the listed objectives.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Planning and Development Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a zoning designation for the corridor that will result in higher quality development and will address issues with uses such as used car lots, strip retail, and commercial franchises.</li> </ul>	1-2 years	Planning and Development Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secure the stability of residential areas through housing rehabilitation, demolition of structures not feasible for rehabilitation, and new single-family and small-scale multi-family housing.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Building Safety Department, Community Development Division
<b><u>Future Zoning Action Steps</u></b>	<b><u>Time Frame</u></b>	<b><u>Responsibility</u></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommended future zoning decisions be based on future land use goals for the study area.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Planning and Development Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Revise/amend zoning standards to encourage/require mixed use development.</li> </ul>	1-2 years	Planning and Development Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify appropriate zoning designations that would promote mixed use development</li> </ul>	1-2 years	Planning and Development Department



<b>Traffic Circulation Action Steps</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install marked pedestrian crosswalks at intersections of Broadway and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–WT Weaver Boulevard</li> <li>–Hillside Street</li> <li>–Chestnut Street</li> <li>–Mt. Clare Street</li> <li>–North Street</li> <li>–Magnolia Street</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1-2 years 1-2 years 1-2 years 1-2 years 2-5 years 2-5 years	Public Works Department NCDOT Engineering Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install ADA-standard pedestrian sidewalks at following blocks fronting Broadway: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Woodrow Street north to Hillside Street</li> <li>–Hillside Street north to North Street</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1-2 years 1-2 years	Public Works Department NCDOT Engineering Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install pedestrian crossing signals at intersections of Broadway and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–WT Weaver Boulevard</li> <li>–Chestnut Street</li> <li>–Mt. Clare Street</li> <li>–I-240 on-ramp</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1-2 years 1-2 years 1-2 years 1-2 years	Public Works Department NCDOT Engineering Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remove left turn lanes on Broadway (north bound) at WT Weaver Boulevard and North Street and construct pedestrian safety refuge.</li> </ul>	2-5 years	NCDOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To enhance pedestrian usage, conduct a streetscape study that focuses on street trees, furniture, and other pedestrian amenities. Develop an action plan to implement recommendations from the study.</li> </ul>	2-5 years	Planning and Development Department, Quality Forward, Riverlink, Inc., Parks and Recreation Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage property owners whose lots abut sidewalks to keep walks clean and passable.</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Neighborhood/Private Sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a study for a Broadway Corridor bus route, focusing on number of possible riders and bus stops, and service for UNCA.</li> </ul>	1-2 years	Asheville Transit Authority, UNCA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce traffic hazards on Broadway, I-240 north to Chestnut Street by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–reducing vehicular lanes to two 12-foot wide lanes</li> <li>–providing parallel parking on the east side.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	2-5 years	Public Works Department, NCDOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post "No U-Turn" signs at left turn lanes</li> </ul>	1-2 years	NCDOT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install designated bike lanes from I-240 north to WT Weaver Boulevard.</li> </ul>	1-2 years	Public Works Department, NCDOT Engineering Department

<b><i>Parks and Recreation Action Steps</i></b>	<b><i>Time Frame</i></b>	<b><i>Responsibility</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obtain public and private funds sources to begin the Greenway planning and construction</li> </ul>	1-2 years	Parks and Recreation Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage citizen input in the development of recreation areas for Reed Creek/Broadway</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Parks and Recreation Advisory Board and Department, City Council, Private Sector
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the guidelines set forth by the Asheville Greenways Master Plan for the development and construction of a Level 3, unpaved multi-use trails for the Broadway Greenway</li> </ul>	2-5 years	Parks and Recreation Department, Public Works Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a streetscape plan for the Broadway corridor, incorporating pedestrian amenities, street furniture, landscaping, etc.</li> </ul>	2-5 years	Parks and Recreation Department, Planning and Development Department, corridor property owners
<b><i>Economic Development Action Steps</i></b>	<b><i>Time Frame</i></b>	<b><i>Responsibility</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify appropriate businesses for location along the corridor.</li> </ul>	1-2 years	City Economic Development Office, Planning and Development Department
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an economic development incentive package to encourage development of appropriate businesses along the corridor.</li> </ul>	1-2 years	City Economic Development Office, Planning and Development Department, City Council
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with NCDOT to obtain excess right-of-way along Broadway for use as economic incentives to promote desired development.</li> </ul>	1-2 years	City Economic Development Office, Planning and Development Department, NCDOT

**Number / Type of Structures**

<u>beginning at 19/23 Highway on west side</u>	<u>commercial</u>	<u>residential</u>	<u>institutional</u>	<u>vacant</u>
to intersection of Cumberland	2	0	0	0
to intersection of Catawba	2	0	0	0
to intersection of Cauble	0	0	0	0
to intersection of Ocala	1	1	0	0
to intersection of Magnolia	0	0	0	0
to intersection of Chestnut	0	0	0	0
to intersection of Elizabeth	2	1	0	1
to intersection of Starnes	1	2	0	2
to intersection of Cherry	2	0	1	0
to intersection of I-240	0	0	0	0
to intersection of Hiwassee	0	0	0	0
Totals	10	4	1	3

<u>beginning at Woodfin Street on east side</u>	<u>commercial</u>	<u>residential</u>	<u>institutional</u>	<u>vacant</u>
to intersection of I-240	21	0	0	0
to intersection of Bordeau	3	0	0	5
to intersection of Maxwell	1	6	0	0
to intersection of Monroe	1	3	0	0
to intersection of Chestnut	2	0	0	0
to intersection of Mt. Claire	1	0	0	0
to intersection of Woodrow	0	5	0	0
to intersection of Hillside	0	15	1	0
to intersection of North	0	9	0	0
to intersection of Weaver	0	3	0	0
to intersection of Division	0	0	10	0
to intersection of 19/23	1	0	0	0
Totals	30	41	11	5

**Number of Vacant Lots**

<u>beginning at 19/23 Highway on west side</u>	<u># of vacant lots</u>
to intersection of Cumberland	0
to intersection of Catawba	0
to intersection of Cauble	12
to intersection of Ocala	18
to intersection of Magnolia	8
to intersection of Chestnut	5
to intersection of Elizabeth	1
to intersection of Starnes	4
to intersection of Cherry	0
to intersection of I-240	1
to intersection of Hiawassee	2
Total	51

<u>beginning at Woodfin Street on east side</u>	<u># of vacant lots</u>
to intersection of I-240	1
to intersection of Bordeaux	5
to intersection of Maxwell	0
to intersection of Monroe	1
to intersection of Chestnut	0
to intersection of Mt. Claire	0
to intersection of Woodrow	10
to intersection of Hillside	2
to intersection of North	5
to intersection of Weaver	3
to intersection of Division	0
to intersection of 19/23	1
Total	28